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ABSTRACT

This book examines Polonia, the Polish ethnic community in America created by three giant waves of immigration between 1880 and 1990. The complicated history of this ethnic group is reflected in the lives of increasing numbers of Polish Americans, including recent immigrants brought by political and economic changes, as they achieve middle class status. Postcommunist Polish immigrants to the United States have sometimes found themselves at odds with Polish Americans of longer standing. In addition, as economic conditions worsen in Poland, the country is reaching to the Polish American community for support. Polish Americans have built a complex and organized ethnic community over the course of 100 years. This ethnic survival has been supported by the institutional completeness of the Polish American community when regarded from religious, educational, economic, political, family, and recreational viewpoints. Of particular interest to educators is the educational institution of the Polish American community. Education has long been closely associated with religion in Polonia. Polish Americans historically found the public schools unacceptable in terms of their emphasis on American culture and language. They turned to parochial schools to support Polish ethnicity, yielding to government pressure to teach English in these schools. Even in recent years, Polish ethnic groups have pressed institutions of higher learning to include Polish language and literature courses. Although some Polish cultural and educational societies and institutions had begun to die out by the 1970s, there has been a revival in interest in Polish culture and a rebirth of some traditional cultural educational organizations. At the same time, Polish Americans are becoming more aware of the necessity of being familiar with the culture and traditions of dominant United States society. (SLD)

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